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ABSTRACT

A 3-year study followed the progress of eight native Spanish-speaking elementary school students, aged 9-11, learning English as a Second Language (ESL). The subjects were chosen because they were considered successful in school. Research focused on the processes through which Latino students in grades 4-6 learn, accept, support, and at times resist their work in classrooms and come to help reproduce the pattern of school success and failure represented by statistics. Particular attention was paid to describing and understanding the school's literacy program in both English and Spanish. Data were gathered through classroom observation and in interviews and conversations with teachers, parents, staff, and students. After a review of relevant literature, classroom procedures are described and results are summarized in these areas: English reading; English language arts and writing; and Spanish reading. By the end of the study, two of the eight students were no longer considered to be succeeding. It is concluded that the remaining six were successful despite an educational program that did not meet their needs and was not consistent or coherent. Inservice training was met with indifference or strong resistance by most teachers, and administration was not supportive of reform. A 12-page bibliography is included. (MSE)

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THE FABRIC OF EDUCATION IN A LATINO COMMUNITY: THE SOCIAL-POLITICAL CONTEXT OF LITERACY DEVELOPMENT IN A SECOND LANGUAGE*

*(This paper reports on part of the research undertaken for a dissertation completed at the University of California, Berkeley in 1992.)

by
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INTRODUCTION

> . . . in an important sense the education of those who speak two languages can never be 'equal' to the education of monolinguals; it must be inferior or superior. Whether it will be depends heavily on whether literacy is provided in only one or both languages. (Christian, 1976, p.38).

> The students were assigned another workbook page, #27, in the English language workbook. After the assignment was given, one child asked plaintively, "Aren't we going to read?" The Instructional Assistant responded with much irritation, "I told you that we have to learn these skills before we can read. I follow the book" (Fieldnotes, 10/85).

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The scenario is repeated year after year. Schools where the majority of the student population is Latino, and for whom the primary language is or was Spanish, produce some of the lowest achievement test scores in the whole school district. How does this happen? What processes do these students engage in? How do the few students who succeed in becoming sufficiently literate in a second language so as to be considered "successful" academically do it? Do they follow a different curriculum?

Toward a New Theoretical Sensitivity for Latino Underachievement

Adequate data on the processes of success and failure in educational programs serving the Latino population do not exist in the literature. To address these processes requires an understanding of how students, teachers, school staff, and community interact within the existing material conditions to create and reproduce the educational picture commonplace in these communities.

Since the passage of the Federal Bilingual Education Act of 1967, education programs have been designed, at least on paper, that use both the Spanish and English languages in the curriculum. The actual implementation of these programs spans a large range, from virtually no

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use of the Spanish language in the instructional program to some consistent use on a daily basis. Nevertheless, the statistical picture makes it clear that current educational practices are not meeting the needs of the majority of Latino students enrolled in California's public schools. What is not clear is, who succeeds, who fails, and what exactly takes place in educational programs serving the Latino, specifically the Spanish-English, bilingual population.

The literature on literacy development makes it clear that the uses of language that a child learns in the home can mediate the success he/she will experience in literacy training (Wells, 1981). The conclusion from the literature, of course, assumes a coherent and developmentally sound literacy training program. This is a questionable assumption as regards the educational programming offered to Latino students in inner-city schools. Inner-city school settings, where the majority of California's Latinos are enrolled, are hampered by a lack of good teachers, adequate materials, and conditions conducive to learning (Goodlad, 1984).

It would seem, then, that a better understanding of the issues surrounding the question of academic success in the Latino community requires process data that focus on what actually takes place in the schools, classrooms, and the social-political milieu in which these programs operate. Since Latinos are making their own history within the constraints of the reality in which they are immersed, it is critical that we identify the ways in which the social reality of the educational process in the Latino community is experienced by the people themselves. By producing an ethnographic account of school success in a Latino community I would be able to articulate the educational experiences of Latino students within the structural constraints of the school setting.

Researcher's Role and Function in Cultural Studies

The posture adopted for this research resembles the stance and views expressed in research that has come to be known as "Cultural Studies" (Hall, 1971). Culture is defined here as the fabric of life of a community. It is reshaped and even rewoven by the members' response to the social contexts in which they exist. It is not something that is made once and then passed down like a suit of clothes. It is related to ideas, consciousness, ways of doing things, thinking, common sense, wisdom, and everyday activity. It is also what intellectuals say and the truths held by the people, e.g., morality, politics, etc. In accepting these ideologies people come to believe what is imposed on them. It becomes the "way things should be done."

In this theoretical perspective the researcher comes into the community to observe and learn how the community makes sense of their lived experience, how the members interpret, re-interpret, and sometimes resist the options available and thereby produce the actual cultural practices that reflect the reality of their cultural life at that time in history. In this study, I was interested in discovering the threads and fibers that make up the fabric of education in the Latino community. Therefore, I focused principally on the classrooms and the school community, taking into account the social processes of the classroom and the effects that the politics of the school district had on

the everyday life of students and staff in an upper elementary bilingual education program in a Latino community.

Although I am committed to doing educational research that seeks an understanding of the role that human agency plays through resistance and reinterpretation in the educational outcomes produced and experienced by the members of this community, this type of investigation generally focuses on older students who are more able to articulate the positions they have consciously taken (e.g., Willis, 1977; Kelly Epstein, 1989). However, because I was interested in doing my work at the elementary level, with children between the ages of nine and eleven, I decided to work with students considered "successful" by their teachers and use the data from informal and formal interviews with these students as a way to determine the role that these classrooms played in their success.

In summary, the framework offered here proposes an integration of ethnographic and interpretive methods to partially fill a void in the literature on classroom practices in schools serving large numbers of Latino students. Although I do not articulate the role of human agency in order to explain the contradictions, mediations, and transformations that take place within social agencies such as the school because my target group was so young, my study is premised on a theoretical perspective that emphasizes the relationship between larger social structures and individual actions. On the other hand, some of the teachers involved in the study offered insights that help illuminate the complex processes of education in this community. The design, execution, and analysis of the study begins with an acceptance of the school as a major institution of reproduction.

The Study

This study began by identifying successful upper elementary school-age children in a contemporary, urban, Latino community. The students who participated in the study were enrolled in the fourth or fifth grade at the beginning of the study and were viewed by their teachers as "succeeding" in becoming literate in English. During the course of the study the students ranged in age from nine to eleven years. All participants were Latinos who were second language learners, were within the normal range of intelligence as determined by teacher judgment and school records, and were willing to participate in the study.

In order to study literacy development within a social-political context, I engaged in research designed to discover and understand the social processes and material conditions that a group of upper elementary Latino students experienced in an educational setting while becoming sufficiently literate in English so as to be recognized as successful. Although I chose specific students to follow more carefully during the three years I spent in particular classrooms, in a very real way I learned about the whole school community and not just the eight students I followed.

The departmentalized literacy programs took me into more classroom settings and lessons then I would have observed had the students been in self-contained classrooms.

The research at the school site encompassed eleven classrooms and three curricular areas, English reading, Spanish reading, and English language arts. I focused on the processes through which Latino students in the fourth through sixth grades learn, accept, support, and at times resist their work in classrooms and come to help reproduce the pattern of school success and failure represented by the statistics. I paid particular attention to describing and understanding the actual literacy program operating in both English and Spanish in this California public school.

In order to discover the "fabric of education" in Latino classrooms, I spent my time studying the threads and fibers that made up the backdrop for literacy development in a second language, i.e., the teachers, classrooms, and the curriculum. Through formal interviews and conversations I tried to bring to the fore the teachers' tacit knowledge about what they were doing to develop literacy skills in a second language and their understanding and beliefs about how this feat was accomplished. Parents, students, and other support staff members also added their understandings and knowledge to my research. I begin the following section by reviewing the literature most relevant to the issues of Latino underachievement and literacy development raised both in the past and by the theoretical stance adopted here.

THE FABRIC OF EDUCATION IN A LATINO COMMUNITY

In the U.S. educational system the question of academic achievement is intrinsically related to the issue of literacy development. The curriculum materials used during the required years of schooling assume well-developed **English** reading and writing skills. Hence, those students who fail to achieve adequate literacy skills in English do not achieve academically either. This, unfortunately, is the dominant pattern among the Spanish-speaking linguistic minority in this country (Carter, 1970; Carter and Segura, 1979; United States Commission on Civil Rights, 1975; Otheguy, 1982).

Related Research

The issue of literacy development for the Spanish-speaking touches on the group's linguistic, cultural, political, and socio-economic status in the United States. For those who must decide on educational policy and implement programs, this issue raises questions about language development, as well as the cultural and social-political context in which the literacy training takes place.

In fact, when we look to the education and psycholinguistic literature for insights on what types of literacy training should be provided for the Spanish-speaking, we find a strong consensus about what is needed to insure academic success for these students. This body of literature points us in a direction which is almost, if not completely, opposite to the programs which are put into

practice for the Spanish-speaking in this country, i.e., transitional bilingual education programs. The literature supports biliteracy programs for linguistic minorities in the United States.

Some researchers do not see linguistic issues as the most important. Bowen (1977) argues that choosing a language for educational purposes is not principally a linguistic choice. He contends that minority students do better in language learning than the other students, but that they do not do well in general education. He suggests that expectations for language learning play a large role in whether language is learned. We expect Native-Americans, Mexican-Americans and foreign students to learn English and they do. We don't expect native English language speakers to learn Spanish, French, Russian or Chinese in school and they do not. His analysis leads him to the conclusion that the problem of school success is more related to the status of the minority students than it is to their problems in learning the English language.

Bowen's analysis suggests that research on literacy development among the Spanish-speaking must address itself to the social-political context in which educational programs for linguistic minorites operate. We must examine majority/minority group relations in order to discover and document how this political situation affects the implementation of educational programming for linguistic minorities. Bowen's insight provides a bridge for us to an examination of the cultural and social-political aspects of the question of literacy development for the Spanish-speaking.

In this section of the review, I examine research on literacy development which reflects the "social reality of the schools." I will discuss studies which focus on the socially-situated nature of literacy development. In some cases I was able to find studies or writings which dealt specifically with the target group we are interested in here, second language learners. And in others, at least for the present, one has to be content with the implications apparent in other studies.

I have grouped this literature into three parts. The first group of writings will be discussed under the topic of the cultural perspective on literacy training. I consider language a cultural factor for purposes of this part of the review, and I discuss the confusion between cultural and SES factors.

In the second part I discuss the socio-cognitive nature of the learning task or environment. I include the work done on classroom interaction, collective rationality, and teacher attitudes and judgments as they relate to the question of literacy development. Although this body of research is growing, it is still small at the present time.

In the last part of the review, I focus on the political meanings present in the learning situation. This literature covers such topics as society's role in facilitating school success and the role of teacher and learners' statuses. I move then to a summary of the traditional explanations for Latino underachievement and then to a body of research which most influenced my own research.

It goes without saying that studies will often touch on more than one of these topics, or will not be an exact fit under a particular topic. As is the custom in reviews, I have tried to include only relevant studies and to place these under topics where the insights resulting from them would be the most helpful. I begin with the literature which discusses the cultural and/or SES factors as they affect literacy development among linguistic minorities.

Angel (1972) posed the question: Social Class or Culture? He asked if in addressing the task of improving the school performance of minority groups, it was necessary to focus on the factors associated with poverty and lower social class membership or if cultural factors were more important. He argued that the social distance between the advantaged majority and the disadvantaged minorities was increasing rather than decreasing. This situation suggests that it would be more important to account for social rather than cultural factors when dealing with the question of differences in academic achievement.

The more pertinent question, however, is what relative import these factors have on pedagogy (p. 46). He thinks that recognizing differences between the majority culture and linguistic minorities is only a starting point. Educational practice must go beyond that.

> . . . Part of what we have charged as a discriminatory middle-class curriculum, is, in fact, the continued application of psychological and educational concepts that no longer have any validity. Intelligience is one of these and the bias in favor of conceptual-verbal learning is another. . . . The problem of the education of the state's minority groups is more than just a linguistic one. To disentangle economic factors from cultural factors is an extremely difficult and complex task, due partly to the complexity of the culture concept itself and partly to the lack of sufficient knowledge derived from research regarding its impact on the teaching/learning process. There has been oversimplification of the culture concept and failure to conceive of it as an integrated totality which includes cognitive, aesthetic, and evaluative elements. There has also been failure to take into account the great variability of acculturation that actually exists (p. 45-46).

In 1972, Angel articulated the call to go beyond the recognition of cultural differences to an investigation of the ramifications for pedagogy that such an overarching concept could have. He advocated that the study of cultural differences needed to be recognized and studied beyond the area of food and folklore.

Almost a decade later, Au and Jordan (1981) focused on "culturally appropriate" solutions for the improvement of reading achievement among Hawaiian children by testing the cultural hypothesis that

> there were differences between the ways the children learned at home or among their peers and the ways in which they were expected to learn in school. These differences might prevent or interfere with learning to read because the children would find themselves in

> instructional situations which would not be congruent with the learning strategies already familiar to them (p. 143).

The children were successful in a reading program which used a context and teaching strategies the children were more accustomed to. The researchers believe that the new program (KEEP) was successful, in part, because of the culturally sensitive teaching techniques which incorporated an important speech event in Hawaiian culture, "talk story." In addition, the substantial amount of peer interaction within small groups might have been a "significant factor in the success of the reading program" (pp. 140-143).

They concluded that a major problem in teaching Hawaiian children has been that these children do not recognize the usual reading lessons as situations in which they should apply their "full range of cognitive and linguistic abilities" (p.151). The implications for the education of other minorities are described in terms of the analysis used to develop the successful reading program. The process involved in the analysis could be used "to develop learning situations which are more congruent with those the child has experienced in his own culture" (p. 151).

Au and Jordan do not discuss the disentanglement of cultural and SES factors in their study. However, it is common knowledge that the native peoples of Hawaii make up a large portion of the lower socio-economic classes in that state. Consequently, the cultural and SES factors are still enmeshed.

Wells' (1981) work on literacy among various social classes in England suggests that the quality of the interaction between adult and child, or the talent for "negotiating meaning" verbally, was one of the strongest predictors of success in reading in the primary grades rather than SES levels. It is difficult to apply this finding to second language learners given the very marked cultural and socio-economic differences between Wells' subjects and the Spanish-speaking in the United States. However, if ability to negotiate meaning verbally is a strong predictor of success in literacy training, it is reasonable to assume that skills for doing this would be stronger in the more developed language. This suggests that literacy training in the more developed language would yield better results. For the Spanish-speaking this mandates literacy programs in Spanish.
The second group of studies to be discussed focuses on the socio-cognitive nature of the task or the environment. Studies in this category discuss the topics of classroom interaction and collective rationality as they relate to the development of literacy skills. As was stated earlier, this is a growing area of research.

McDermott (1977) considers teacher-student relations to be the key to successful classrooms. Based on his research on the social organization of reading groups, he concludes that groups which are marked by turn taking struggles do not do as well as the groups which negotiate turn taking more smoothly.

> Any classroom with chronic conversational turn taking problems is most likely working with a minimum of teacher-pupil common sense, good relations, and learning. Classrooms are in trouble when children talk all day long against the expressed wishes of the teacher, or do absolutely no talking despite the urgings of the teacher. The first problem dominates urban schools for minority children, and the second problem flourishes in white schools for Native American children... Both populations are marked by a high rate of school failure (p. 171).

McDermott goes on to suggest that high rates of school failure arise when a group in power is in charge of the education of minority groups. He lists the various groups who fall into this pattern of school failure as evidence for his point. Indian children in North and South America fail, as well as Mexican children in American Anglo schools, African children in Western colonial schools, and Black children in American schools (p. 176).

He describes three types of conflict which can occur between a teacher's way of talking and the students' way of talking. I will discuss only the one which is relevant to my discussion of literacy development among second language learners, language conflict. McDermott proposes that language conflict may well have the most "devastating effects on the child's motivation to read." It is harder to decode in an unknown language and, secondly, when a foreign language is required it is usually an indication that members of one group are oppressing the other. Moreover, it is usually the case that the teachers are members of the oppressing group and attempt

> to mold minority children to their own images. In terms of the politics of the classroom, this is an explosive situation. Reading skills can often be found in the resulting debris.

McDermott's discussion of majority/minority group relations almost puts him into the category of studies which focus on the political meanings present in the learning situation, but because his principal focus is on the world of the classroom it was more appropriate that his analysis and insights be discussed under this topic. In a later study, McDermott and Gospodinoff (1981) reconsider the claim that minority children experience failure in school as a result of the mismatch between their codes for making sense with each other and the codes used by their teachers who are usually from socially more powerful groups.

These authors conclude that the constant miscommunication between teachers and students is not an accident and represents an "interactional accomplishment" for the children and teachers involved. This is true because of the conditions under which these people must come together either to teach or to learn to read and write (p. 212).

They suggest that miscommunication is nurtured in the classroom in the following way. Many children come to school, most of them poor or minority children, who are not submerged in literacy skills at home. Consequently, they are behind their peers in reading and present pedagogical and organizational problems for the teachers. The teachers are under pressure to

develop reading skills in these children by a certain date. Both the teachers and the students make adjustments for the quandaries in which they find themselves in school.

The children with reading problems are placed in the bottom group and although they spend the same amount of time at the reading table as the other groups, because of all the interruptions, a large portion of which are initiated by the other groups in the classroom, they spend only about one-third the amount of time in actual work time as the top group does. The rest of the time they are engaged in attentional struggles with the teacher.

> The net effect of this is that the children in the bottom group fall further behind the children in the top group for every day they spend in the classroom. The alternative to this is that they learn how to read at home. If they do not do this before school, they apparently do not do it after they enter school, and they get caught in the communication systems that accentuate this discrepancy. Placement in the bottom group of this classroom (and classrooms without such tracking into ability groups appear to get much the same job done in different ways) works like a self-fulfilling prophecy in that the children in this group consistently get less concentrated, quality instruction than the children in the other groups. And this is the case for an excellent teacher who cares deeply about the children (p. 228).

What is of relevance from this analysis to the topic of literacy development among second language learners is that all too often children who are exited from ESL reading classes or bilingual education programs prematurely end up in the "bottom group" which McDermott and Gospodinoff have described and help to continue to fulfill that prophecy. This analysis may well explain a large part of the story behind the gigantic rates of illiteracy which characterize much of the U.S. Spanish-speaking population. These authors also suggest that learning to read is a critical requirement for upward mobility in modern nations. As a result, those who don't acquire literacy skills achieve the same "adaptational skills" that their parents have and a new generation of those labeled "disadvantaged" is instituted.

While it is clear that we do not yet know enough to state definitely how it is that illiteracy is achieved by thousands of second language learners, McDermott and Gospodinoff have managed to move us into the actual classroom setting so that we can begin to deal with the social processes operating there which influence the acquistition of literacy. There is a critical need to know more about these material conditions and how they affect successful and nonsuccessful second language readers.

Another view of the classroom environment and the nature of the task of learning to read is offered by Cazden (1981). She highlights the social context of reading. In this work she discusses the need to expand the definition and study of classroom interaction to include more than just the interaction between teacher and students.

> Learning to read, like mature reading later on, is certainly a cognitive process; but it is also a very social activity, deeply embedded in interactions with teacher and peers. Hopefully, as we understand those interactions more fully, we will be able to design more effective environments for helping children learn (p.118).

She concludes by suggesting that the term "classroom interaction" needs to be re-interpreted to include interactions among students and not to be restricted to interactions between teacher and students only.

Only one other point needs to be made in this section of the review before closing, namely, that how children talk, their degree of accented speech, has been shown to have important ramifications for academic success. Ramirez, Arce-Torres and Politizer (1982) found that teachers tend to view pupils whose speech style is not standard English less favorably.

Moreover, both teachers and pupils rated standard English higher than nonstandard speech varieties on correctness, appropriateness, and likelihood of achievement in school. After attendance at a workshop on language variation, one group of teachers tended to rate code switching even lower than heavily hispanized English. However, another group of teachers involved in a year-long training program ranked code-switching higher than hispanized English on the likelihood of achievement and did not rank the achievement potential of code-switchers significantly lower than that of speakers of standard English.

The implications from this study for second language learners are ominous. Sensing that your speech is not appreciated you might well be intimidated enough to refrain from talking on a regular basis. If the development of literacy skills requires verbal interaction, then this study suggests that teacher attitudes or even societal attitudes toward linguistic variation must improve for literacy rates to improve among Spanish-speaking second language learners.

The studies reviewed in this section suggest that we need to study what is actually happening during the course of literacy training among second language learners. We need more research on the social context of learning literacy skills: the teacher's input, the child's input and the societal context in which the education program is being carried out.

The final group of writings to be considered deals with the topic of the political meanings which are apparent in the learning situation. Two of the questions subsumed under this larger topic are society's role and responsibility in facilitating school success, and the role of social stratification. As was stated earlier, some of the studies already reviewed would also fit into this category in a general way. However, the writer decided that the studies discussed in this section would specifically represent a macro analysis of the phenomenon rather than be restricted to the classroom setting.

The role that societal support plays in literacy development has been elaborated on by Fishman (1980b) in his study of bilingual education programs which include a biliteracy

component. Fishman studied French, Hebrew, Greek-American and Chinese schools in New York City to determine how biliterate programs and communities carry on successful programs. None of the programs were Title VII transitional bilingual education programs. The purpose of the study was to determine differences in ethnic language function, pedagogy, and linguistic and writing system differences.

Fishman found that all schools differed in these areas and all succeeded in implementing a biliteracy program. He concluded that a clear function for literacy in each language seemed to have determined much of the success encountered in biliteracy acquisition and retention in the schools he studied. The language did not have to be used in a practical way; if the language was valued by the community as a language of literacy, that was function enough.

> . . . The early childhood acquisition and retention of biliteracy seems to require nothing more than two "cultures of reading" to institute, implement, and reward it. When viewed in societal perspective, children seem to learn to read, in some ways, not unlike the way they learn to speak---by being immersed in a world that reads, that enjoys reading, that benefits from reading, that values reading, that supports reading, and that demands reading for full-fledged membership. Given this kind of support, societal biliteracy is relatively unproblematic. It easily weathers such minor static as ethnopedagogic, ethnolinguistic and ethnographic variation, given a strong ethno-functional base. These three dimensions of variation can be realized in any one of a number of different ways, and yet the acquisition and retention of biliteracy may remain unaffected and definitely unimpeded. The eternal quest for better teaching methods must not lead us away from this basic truth (p. 59).

While he is careful to avoid drawing conclusions from his work to all the problems surrounding the issue of literacy in American education today, he does point out the discrepancy between pedagogical advances and student achievement, as an indicator that the complexity of the issue extends beyond the classroom.

> . . . As optimal pedagogy advances, the discrepancy between actual and optimal student attainment grows. Seemingly then, the familial and the societal contribution to attainment becomes even greater, and without favorable and constant input of families, neighborhoods, and even broader societal factors, such as encountered in the schools we have been studying, the attainment of a literate democracy for millions upon millions of English speaking monolinguals will remain problematic indeed. Thus, it is ultimately at the societal level that 'a job must be done,' rather than at the level of methodology per se. Without proper societal arrangements--reward, opportunities, and encouragement--our most advanced methodological refinements come a cropper. With them, they may be somewhat superfluous (pp. 60-61).

Fishman's insights leave us wondering about the actual relationship between linguistic issues and the attainment of literacy skills by minority groups in the United States, as well as the

harder problem of how to insure the kind of societal support which seems to be apparent in successful programs of biliteracy.

Bain (1983) in his discussion of ethnic bilingualism in Canada offers a political-economic analysis which discusses society's role in influencing the acquisition of literacy. His analysis is applicable to the controversy surrounding U.S. bilingual education programs. In Canada, much of the discussion of ethnic bilingualism, with the exception of English/French has usually focused on the ethnic language as the "problem." The problem is discussed in terms of the individual, that is, it has been seen as a problem which confronts individuals and not as part of the social structure and attitudes operating in Canada.

Because it is seen as a question of individual choice, it falls within the framework of individual liberalism. When these principles of liberal democracy are applied to education it becomes unnecessary to analyze the political-economic basis of majority-minority relationships. Instead, the focus is placed on "language" or "culture" or both as impediments to educational advancement.

The failure of individual members of the minority groups to achieve is attributed to the disadvantage of knowing their own language and/or culture or because of their lack of knowledge of the majority language and/or culture. Programs of language and/or cultural compensation are instituted to remedy inequalities among groups. Consequently, "inequality in educational achievement is explained in culturalist terms of language per se, rather than in terms of language as the by-product of the ensemble of social relationships" (p.64).

Both Fishman and Bain appear to suggest that a critical element for the attainment of literacy skills by linguistic minorities is social change; program offerings will not get better or results improve until society moves to bring these changes about. It goes without saying that neither of them is suggesting that linguistic minorities should sit back and wait for this to take place. Those involved in research will probably continue to work for change by means of that avenue. The question of what the linguistic minorities should do to bring about this change is not elaborated on. These researchers seem to be addressing those who currently wield enough political power to bring about change in their respective countries.

McDermott (1974) studies the problem of illliteracy from the vantage point of social stratification. He posits the proposition that

> . . . children from minority communities appear to regenerate their parents' pariah status by learning how to act in ways condemned by the larger host community (p. 82).

After defining the problem this way, he asks "where this learning comes from and whether or not it represents a rational adaptation to socialization attempts by host schools" (p. 83). This

study by McDermott focuses more on a societal level than his studies which were discussed in the section on the socio-cognitive nature of the learning environment.

> Because behavioral competence is differently defined by different social groups, many children and teachers fail in their attempts to establish rational, trusting and rewarding relationships across ethnic, racial or class boundaries in the classroom. As a result of this miscommunication, school learning is shunned by many minority children and school failure becomes a peer group goal (p.82).

He reasons that a child must achieve his "pariah" status for it is neither "ascribed" or "acquired" in the sense that puberty is acquired. To begin the process, some form of communication breakdown occurs and is not repaired quickly. As a result of this a "mutually destructive" relationship is established between the student and teacher. Where there are ethnic code differences between them, negative relations can occur with such frequency that the children set up a classroom organization which competes with that established by the teacher. As is explained below, in McDermott's own words, the competition escalates until the usual statuses are established and reinforced to the detriment of the children, the teacher, and society.

> The teacher's role as the administrator in charge of failure becomes dominant. And the children's revolt grows. School work gets caught in this battle, and a high rate of school failure results. A great deal of social work must be performed by both teachers and students in order for so many failures to occur. Whether the records list all passing or all failing grades, student records represent achievements in the sense that many difficult battles in the politics of everyday life had to be fought in their making. Teachers do not simply ascribe minority children to failure. Nor do minority children simply drag failure along, either genetically or socially, from the previous generation. Rather, it must be worked out in every classroom, every day, by every teacher and every child in their own peculiar ways.

Although McDermott is not specifically speaking about second language learners in this study, his remarks about the socio-political status of the learner have relevance for U.S. linguistic minorities. One must assume that it would be even more difficult to make "common sense" if two people are not speaking the same language. What is most unfortunate is that we do not presently have the studies that demonstrate what second language learners "do" when they are enrolled in literacy training in an L2. It is commonly believed that they are docile and quiet; what has yet to be demonstrated is that this too is not a form of resistance.

Given the nature of the research problem, studies which would also be of interest to us here include those which focus on the effects of social processes upon the implementation of educational programming. While research on the ethnography of bilingual classrooms has been done, the focus in these studies has been on the micro processes operating within particular classrooms (e.g., Trueba et al., 1981). We are interested in work which has studied the

relationship or interplay between social structures, such as the political and social status of a group, and the implementation of educational programs.

A recent dissertation (Collins, 1983) moves closer to combining a study of social structure with small-scale studies of communicative process than do other works in the area of the sociology of language. Much of the emphasis of this work is placed on communicative competence and strategies and how these are affected by institutional constraints and realities. A substantive discussion of the outcomes and ramifications of ability groupings is entertained in connection with the above-mentioned topics.

In his discussion of the effects of social class, Collins argues that

> by careful attention to institutional goals and classifying practices it is possible to define communicative contexts and tasks of sufficient generality so as to gain direct insight into the ways in which the organization of communication perpetuates the inegalitarian social processes of which it is an inextricable part (pp. 7-8).

Collins' study raises the question of intentionality behind the quality of the educational program offered to the Spanish speakers in the setting discussed here. It goes without saying that access to literacy skills was not distributed in an egalitarian way. United States bilingual education programs as set up by legislation, court rulings, and federal regulations are intended to provide an "equal educational opportunity" for those who lack native fluency in the English language. These programs are supposed to serve linguistic minority children whose native languages include, among others, Spanish, Navajo, Cantonese, Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian.

The question of intentionality will not be taken up in this paper, not because it is not considered important, but rather because it would make this review much too long. I will reserve the right to make use of Collins' insight to inform future discussions on the topic of educational programming for linguistic minorities.

A review of other literature which has bearing on the complex research problem studied and analyzed here reveals work which has been done on the effects of race or social class on educational programming. Ogbu (1974) documents the learned habits or behaviors of a racial minority in Stockton, California, in response to the fact that the avenues of academic and economic success were closed to this group.

The data and school site discussed in the current study could be looked at again for evidence of learned behaviors on the part of the Spanish speakers in response to an educational program which in actual fact did not "function." However, what is of more relevance to the current study is Ogbu's finding that Orientals are believed to have been born smarter than other minorities. This attitude certainly appeared to permeate some of the explanations given by some members of the staff for the low test scores of the Spanish speakers.

Some research has been carried out on the implications of students' social class and teacher expectations in elementary school classrooms. Rist (1970), in his study of self-fulfilling prophecies in ghetto education, has pointed out that

> When a teacher bases her expectations of performance on the social status of the student and assumes that the higher the social status the higher the potential of the child, those children of low social status suffer a stigmatization outside of their own choice or will. Yet there is a greater tragedy than being labeled as a slow learner, and that is being treated as one (p. 448).

Laosa (1979) has reviewed the literature which focuses on teacher-student interaction in the classroom in search of what is known through research about inequality in the classroom. A few observational studies have been carried out in this area. Based on those findings he reports that teachers behave less favorably toward ethnic minority students as compared to non-minority students. Studies which have examined teacher expectations and attitudes rather than behaviors have also revealed "less favorable attitudes and lower expectations toward ethnic minority than nonminority students."

Perhaps the most significant point for the study under consideration here is that low socio-economic status, low academic achievement, and certain styles of speech have been found to prejudice teachers' perceptions and expectations of students and their interactions with students. Students who come from lower socio-economic status homes are viewed and treated less favorably (p. 51). Unfortunately, these studies do not delineate differences in treatment when more than one minority group is present in the setting, which would be of interest for the present study.

I turn now to the traditional explanations of Latino underachievement and a discussion of a different theoretical position for addressing the issue of literacy development and Latino academic achievement.

Traditional Explanations of Latino Underachievement

The academic underachievement of minority students has been examined in the social science research literature, where some investigators have concluded that the phenomenon is caused or prompted by inadequacies in the learner (e.g., cognitive deficits, linguistic deficits, socioeconomic deprivation) and/or inadequacies in the specific cultural practices of this group (Jensen 1971; Deutsch 1963; Moynihan 1967). In the fields ofanthropology and education, minority underachievement has been explained in two ways (Jacob & Jordan 1987, p. 259). One explanation focuses on cultural differences (e.g., Erickson and Mohatt 1981) and the other posits secondary cultural discontinuity (e.g., Ogbu 1974).

Those who propose the cultural difference argument suggest that differences between Anglo and minority cultures in interaction, linguistic, and cognitive styles lead to cultural conflicts that interfere with minority children's abilities to do well in school. The secondary cultural

discontinuity explanation differs in two ways. First, it examines the variations among minority groups in school success and distinguishes between groups that have been incorporated into U.S. society against their will (subordinate or castelike) and do poorly in school, and groups who came to the U.S. by their own choice (immigrant) and frequently do well in school. Second, this approach looks beyond the school and home settings to the larger society and focuses on the minority group's adaptations to the larger society (Jacob and Jordan 1987, p. 259).

The cultural difference perspective has shaped the position taken in studies that have sought to evaluate interactional, linguistic, and cognitive styles of Latinos. As could have been predicted, the school failure of Latino/Hispanic students has been described as a failure on the part of the child to integrate linguistically and culturally. In addition, because these students often do not exhibit the same school adjustment characteristics as white middle class students they are often seen as deficient in talents or abilities. The school failure of Latino students has been viewed as the result of this group's inadequate adaptation to the larger society.

Perhaps the greatest amount of effort has focused on the analysis of issues related to the language question. The emphasis in the press placed on the issue of bilingualism is paralleled in educational research: when Latino/Hispanic students have been the focus of educational research, the greatest amount of energy gravitates toward the analysis of issues related to the language question. By focusing on language as "the primary determinant of Hispanic underachievement," questions concerning school success are usually framed in relationship to bilingualism, affinity for the Spanish language, or lack of English proficiency (Walker, p. 22). As Walker points out, and as is demonstrated in the present study, the tendency to view Latino underachievement as principally a language issue not only fails to consider the complexity of both societal and school influences, it also does not provide a satisfactory explanation when we consider the large numbers of English speaking Latino students who are also low achievers.

The inadequacies of the traditional explanations might seem to suggest that we direct ourselves to a more "objective approach" based on the naturalism or objectivism of the natural sciences methodology. However, naturalism also is defective insofar as it takes social reality for granted; material conditions need to be articulated and cannot simply be presupposed with any accuracy. Critics argue that the attempt to apply this methodology to the social sciences in order to understand human subjectivity and intersubjectivity results not just in dismal failure, but also in a distortion of the phenomenon studied (Bernstein, p.133). Naturalists do not account for the way in which this social reality is constituted and maintained, in what ways it is intersubjective, or how actors in their common-sense thinking interpret their own actions and the actions of others.

> . . . a human actor is constantly interpreting his own acts and those of others. To understand human action we must not take the position of an outside observer who "sees" only the physical manifestations

> of these acts; rather we must develop categories for understanding what the actor--from his own point of view--"means" in his actions (Bernstein, pp.138-9).

Another approach to an analysis of the education of minority groups and the poor comes from the work done by Bowles and Gintis in the mid '70's. This approach posits that the the schools serve to reproduce the social classes needed to continue the capitalism practiced in the United States. That is to say, the system is designed to supply workers for the capitalist labor force and students at the lowest levels simply filter through the system and continue to reproduce the outcome apparent in the society.

Others have argued that this mechanistic explanation (reproduction) does not adequately explain the dismal educational outcomes for the poor and minority groups (Apple, 1982; Giroux, 1983; Hardcastle, 1985; Willis, 1977). This theory has been criticized for its reading of culture and politics as mirror-like images that passively reflect dominant class interests (Apple, 1982, p. 165). In other words, this theory of reproduction, while a more sophisticated rendering of how the schools reproduce the same results, leaves out a satisfactory discussion of the role of individual and class resistance to the ideology presented by the schools. To state the critique in theoretical terms, this explanation overlooks the autonomous nature of culture, politics, and the economy as well as the contradictions within and among them (Apple, 1982, p.165). As even a novice teacher can testify, resistance and reinterpretation play a role in the educational process, especially in schools serving the poor and minority groups in the United States.

To sum up before moving to a more detailed description of my research, I will comment on the overview of the research presented in the preceding pages. The studies done from the perspective of psycholinguistics and societal factors, while interesting, are nevertheless questionable because they are ahistorical, apolitical, and generally atheoretical. Consequently, they leave much to be desired because education is historical, political and practiced on the basis of theory.

On the other hand, the work done by the reproduction theorists has its own severe limitations because it is speculative and not grounded in the context of the classrooms which the reproduction theorists talk about in their writings. Although, I was guided in my own research by the work and perspective articulated by the theorists interested in reproduction, I wanted to understand the classrooms and material conditions that circumscribed the educational programming provided Latino students. I worked to discover the social processes and theories of education operating in these classrooms that would offer an explanation based in the real world of these classrooms. It is only by making the social-political context our starting point that we can come to understand how these outcomes continue to be reproduced.

"Freeway" Elementary School

The current school is a collection of portable buildings laid out on a large asphalt yard. The street borders a freeway, which is the only freeway thoroughfare for large trucks in the city. The freeway noise is a constant companion to the other school activities although less noticeable inside the classrooms.

The school buildings include a permanent building that houses the cafeteria and auditorium; it was opened in 1981. All the other buildings are wooden "relocatable" structures that are lined up in three rows. The buildings resemble army barracks, which may have been what they were before the school district purchased them. These buildings either have no windows or these are so high up that nothing can be seen out of them without standing on a desk. These buildings serve as classrooms, library facilities, and teacher work rooms. The rooms are described as too hot in warm weather and too cold in cold weather. During the course of the study I would often sit in classrooms with children who kept their coats and jackets on and I too would learn to keep my jacket on when the doors were open to let in light or fresh air.

The office, project facilitator's classroom, and special education classroom are housed in a collection of portables that stand perpendicular to the classroom structures. The entire school site, which measures about four acres, is enclosed in cyclone fencing. The fence serves to keep children from going out onto the busy streets that border the school site. Unfortunately, it does not help reduce the noise level resulting from the school's close proximity to the freeway.

Initial Fieldwork

I began my observations and preliminary exploration of the school site and the community in the fall of 1985. In September of that first year of the study I was invited to attend a faculty meeting so that I could be introduced and have the opportunity to speak with the staff about the purpose of my presence at the school site and in the classrooms. The meeting was held in an upper grade classroom. It was a very hot afternoon and the door was kept open for air.

The first item on the agenda was listed as the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) results. The CTBS is a nationally normed standardized achievement test administered district-wide in the spring. These results were presented and analyzed by a district employee from the research unit. The time frame for the staff meeting was one hour and 25 minutes. Twenty minutes of this was allocated to the presentation and discussion of CTBS results. All of the other items on the agenda were allocated 3-10 minutes.

Several handouts were distributed to the teachers and I collected a set also. Reading scores for this school were matched with the total district's performance. Scores were compared for spring of 1984 and spring of 1985. (A difference of +/-2 is considered no change.) The third grade of 1984 (1985's fourth grade) showed an increase of 12 points (they scored at the 36th percentile). This is 3 percentile points below the district average for third graders. The 1984

fourth grade class (1985's fifth grade class) gained 20 points on their mean score (they scored at the 39th percentile). This is 5 percentile points below the district average. The 1984 fifth grade class (1985's sixth grade) lost 7 points. This is 16 percentile points below the district average for all the current sixth graders. 1984's sixth grade, the 1985 seventh graders, gained 3 points. This is very close to no real difference in performance. It is also 17 percentile points below the district average for all seventh graders.

The student performance on the reading test was analyzed to determine the skill areas of greatest need. Need is defined as 50% or more of the students at the non-mastery level as reported on the School Summary Report for the Educationally Disadvantaged Youth group. The 1985 fourth graders at Freeway Elementary were found to be weak in the following reading skills: passage details. The 1985 fifth graders were found to be weak in: passage details, main idea, generalizations, and topic sentence. The 1985 sixth graders were found to be weak in: same meaning, unfamiliar words in context, multimeaning words, missing words in context, character analysis, main idea, generalizations, and writing techniques. This school site could be considered representative of the schools in this district serving the Latino population of the city. Generally speaking, the teachers here did not consider their school any worse than the others (Fieldnotes, 3/86).

Other items on the agenda included my introduction to the faculty and a brief description of my research project. I was welcomed and felt quite comfortable in the group. I passed out a brief written description of what I intended to study and spoke a little about what my conduct and position in the classrooms might be. I tried to stress the fact that I did not want to interrupt any of the classroom activity. I would be doing lots of observing and would schedule any kind of interviewing or discussions with them at a time that would be mutually convenient for all of us. I also explained that I had already secured permission from the district research office to carry out the study.

I was asked if I would be working with the special education children also. I replied that I was interested in looking at children who were both succeeding and failing[1] at becoming literate in the English language and if at this school the children in Special Ed. were the only ones who were failing to become literate then I would certainly be interested in observing in those types of classrooms also. The Special Ed. teacher who had asked the question was positive that that was not the case. I got the distinct impression that I would have no trouble finding children who were failing to achieve adequate literacy skills in English.

[1]Later on the research design was adjusted to focus only on those who were succeeding.

I ended my remarks by suggesting that I would be more than happy to assist in whatever small ways I could while I was in their classooms. I offered myself as an assistant in a limited way, reiterating that my principal purpose for being at the school site was to conduct the study.

Two curricula ideas were discussed by the teachers after my presentation. One idea was the possibility of including letterwriting as part of the second-third grade curriculum. The ultimate objective was to involve peer tutors in the project and so it was necessary to open it up for discussion with the whole staff. There was a pitch given for forming a committee among the faculty to organize the peer tutoring project. The idea met with resistance from the uppergrade teachers.

The next item on the agenda was a report and enlistment of teacher-help to carry out a PARENT PROJECT in the community. Teachers were asked to fill out a survey indicating how many volunteers they already had working in their classrooms. Again, this was presented by a district level employee. She introduced herself as a former principal. The survey was directed at finding out what kinds of help the parents could provide in the classrooms. A volunteer coordinator was to be chosen from among the parents.

Very soon after that faculty meeting I began my fieldwork at the school site. Initially I spent lots of time "hanging out" in the resource teacher's room or the faculty lunchroom talking to whomever was around on break or passing through for whatever reason. I learned a lot about the school and the community this way and gained insight into what actually went on at this school and in the school district.

During the course of a conversation with the resource teacher assigned to coordinate the ESL program and run the Reading Lab, she shared her thoughts about why children at this school continue to do poorly in school. In her opinion the students were misplaced in English reading early on in their school careers. The school district had relied on the Bilingual Syntax Measure (BSM) for placing these children in the appropriate language classrooms. The BSM has been available since the late seventies and has been heavily criticized almost as long. If a child scored high on this test, e.g., a 5 or 6, he/she was placed in an English reading group and instruction in Spanish reading was dropped.

Before 1983 and the arrival of the current principal Spanish reading instruction was not part of the uppergrade curriculum. That is to say, after third grade, instruction in Spanish reading was not offered. In the fall of 1985, Spanish reading instruction for the uppergrades was in it's third year The current principal had spearheaded a move to get Spanish reading classes back into the curriculum in a coherent and consistent way. English and Spanish reading were being offered through sixth grade. At that time the resource teacher thought that the upper grade students were in need of intensive ESL training. She did not articulate what kind of linguistic training they needed in English, for example, speaking, reading, writing, etc. The language development program was

in the hands of the classroom teachers and the resource teacher did not think that they understood enough about how people learn a second language (Fieldnotes, 10/85).

During the first few days of observations I was invited into a second grade classroom as a special guest. The teacher asked me to talk about my work. In talking to some of the students I learned a little about how they saw themselves as future adults and where they thought they fit into the economic structure. One seven year old boy told me he was "gonna be a cop." Another boy wanted to be a welder because "welders make $15 an hour." One of the girls said that she wanted to be a lawyer.

In mid-October, I attended a teacher in-service at the school site; the topic was "primary language and second language acquisition." It was presented by a specialist who worked for the district. Before she began her remarks the principal made a few announcements and then the teachers' union representative announced that a strike vote would be taken on the following Monday. At that time the teachers were working without a contract and negotiations with the district, which had been going on since the summer, had not managed to produce a proposal agreeable to all.

The language specialist presented many ideas discussed and/or supported in the research literature about learning a second language. Among them were: linguistic transfer, comprehensible input, a silent period that can precede production, communication as the prime motivation for the young child, the idea that rules develop through use, peer models needed for second language acquisition, etc. Finally she alerted us all to the fact that many secondary students were entering high school without well-developed language skills in either the primary or the second language.

In a question and answer period that followed the presentation some of the teachers expressed concern over the linguistic diversity of their elementary grade students. Some thought that some of their pupils did not have well-developed language skills in either Spanish or English. Some of the teachers suggested that these students did not fit into the curriculum or the scheduling. I got the impression that some of the teachers thought that the students' learning problems were too difficult to deal with.

The next speaker from the State Department of Education presented a talk and in-service on Sheltered English as a varied and useful approach for teaching second language learners. He made it clear that at the present time the schools' "holding power" for Latinos was very poor. The combination of these two presentations offered a lot for these teachers to think about and attempt to implement. It was not readily apparent how many of the teachers were already familiar with or accepting of the insights and suggestions offered by the two consultants.

Another in-service offered later in the semester focused on Cooperative Learning techniques. Training was offered to all of the teachers, but only one accepted the training offer, the teacher in Room 401. He was a first year teacher.

On January 6, 1986, when the students came back to school after the Christmas break, the teachers were on strike. On the first day of the strike only one of the teachers, the teacher in Room 301, came into work, but not all of the remaining teachers were on the picket line. Only 18 children came to school that morning and the principal and the Instructional Assistants met with them in Room 501.

By January 12 an alternative school had been set up in a local church building about three blocks from the school site in the area called "Coin City." Between 8:30 and 10:00 a.m. the fourth-sixth grades met and between 10:15 and 11:45 a.m. grades K-3 gathered together. The upper grade children were seated by gender in the church hall. That is to say, the girls were seated on one side and the boys on the other. Apparently the seating arrangement occurred spontaneously. The students sat around big tables, as there were no individual desks.

I observed the teacher assigned to room 401 at the alternative school. One of the lessons he presented was on the difference between a fact and an opinion. It was an oral lesson and he did most of the talking. He told the students that if something were a fact then it could be proven. He gave the students a worksheet and they were to mark each statement as either fact or opinion. There were 29 students assembled around four large tables and the teacher walked around correcting the work sheet aloud. He then began to give instructions to the students on how to make a timeline of their lives. He began by using a particular student's life as an example, but it proved to be too hard because that student could not remember enough events in his life. The teacher then switched to his own life as an example.

The students were assigned to begin writing events from their life on the paper. All of the instruction and/or directions had been given in English. As the teacher went around checking on the work it became clear that many of the students did not understand what they were to do. The concept of a timeline was not presented in any detail before the students were assigned to do one.

I also visited the teacher in 301 during the strike. She was the only teacher who never went out on strike and she was meeting with the students who came into school during the strike. I arrived in this classroom about 9:00 a.m. Sixteen of the usually enrolled students were in school the day that I visited. Eleven children were seated in desks at the front of the classroom. They had been assigned to find an article in the encyclopedia and write two paragraphs about it. They were to tell what they learned from it and perhaps do a sketch or drawing. The students were fourth, fifth, and sixth graders. There were ten boys in this group and one girl. The reference books available were The Book of Knowledge, 1938 edition, The Britannica Jr., 1957 edition and Compton's Pictured Encyclopedia, 1961 edition.

One of the I.A.s was working with a group of five students from the primary grades, at the back table. And the teacher was working with three female students, gypsies who had been ordered to be in school by the courts. They were 13, 14 and 16 years of age. They had been coming to school for two days.

The teacher told me that they had "a wonderful attitude." She was timing them as they wrote their names on their papers. The oldest girl usually worked with another teacher for the first three hours of the day and then came into this room. The teacher motioned in the direction of the fourth, fifth, and sixth graders and told me that "those kids are babies." She made a gangly motion with her arms. She interrupted herself and told one of the elementary students who was out of his seat to just get a book and sit down.

She assigned the three gypsy students to write the alphabet. The teacher came over to tell me that the gypsy students did not know direction and that that was important in this case. She demonstrated for me how these students made a number nine using the "wrong" sequence of motion. She went back to the three students and began to show them how to write their numbers. At about 9:40 a.m. there were two I.A.s in the room and neither of them was working with the group of eleven upper grade students. Once again, the teacher interrupted her work with the three gypsy students to reprimand the eleven students for making noise and/or not really working on the assignment.

At 9:50 a.m. the teacher came over to talk to me about her methods for teaching handwriting. She told me that she was ready to wind down and would retire from the district at the end of the year and find another job, perhaps teaching half-time. She said that she had had fun teaching.

At 10:05 a.m. the teacher went to the front of the classroom to review the encyclopedia assignments. She commented on the length of the paragraphs that some of these students had written implying that they were too short. She did not read them for content.

At 10:40 a.m. there was a recess period. After recess (11:00 a.m.) the students were assigned to sit as fourth, fifth, or sixth graders for math. The sixth graders filtered to the back of the room to work with Unifix cubes, while the fourth and fifth graders were given a worksheet to do. The one I.A. who was still in the classroom circulated between and among the primary students and the fourth and fifth graders. The five primary students spent the entire morning doing paper and pencil tasks. They were not encouraged or allowed to speak except to the I.A. The teacher simply ignored the fact that they were there.

The teacher went back to work with the three gypsy students. She instructed them on how to read and copy the multiplication tables. She looked up to scold one of the fourth grade students for "playing" with the Unifix cubes during math time.

I left the room about 11:30 a.m. to go speak with one of the other staff members. The strike lasted a month and when it was over the sixth grade teacher in room 200 had left the district.

Over time, students in the classrooms where I made the majority of my observations would come up and ask me what I was doing there at the school. I often took in a small tape recorder and one of the fourth graders cautioned me one day that Walkmen were not allowed at the `school. I guess that meant that I was not considered one of the teachers or adults but more of a student who was governed by the school rules. I smiled and thanked him for the advice (Fieldnotes, 2/28/86).

Unique Features of the School Site

Freeway Elementary had some unusual characteristics as a school site. Many of the students who attended school there had started their education as preschoolers in the Adult Education class conducted in one of the portable buildings off to one side of the schoolyard. The class offered was "Child Development" and it was organized as a practicum for the parents of young children. The parents had to volunteer some time in the classroom on a regular basis. The teacher who had begun the effort almost fifteen years before I arrived at the school site knew a large percentage of the families who had children at the school. The scope of her efforts on behalf of this community was truly incalculable. She was aware of community needs, celebrations, and illnesses and she, of course, knew all about what I was there for long before she even saw me. The administrator wanted to make sure that I knew of her.

I became aware of her and her role at the school shortly after I began my fieldwork there. She is a fluent bilingual, knowledgable, and experienced Latina teacher. The collaboration and cooperation between the administration and the adult classes offered in two of the portables off to one side of the school yard greatly enhanced the school's importance to this community. In addition to the child development course the adult school also offers various ESL classes for adults.

The teacher, whom I will call Concha, invited me to come out to her portable and visit anytime. I accepted early during the fieldwork and was rewarded with a wealth of information and insight into the workings of the school and the community. In addition, because she had had many of the students in the upper grades as preschoolers she also had recommendations for me for subjects for my study.

Another unusual characteristic of Freeway Elementary was the instability caused or created by inadequate or inconsistent staffing. Recruitment to the district ranks was an increasingly serious problem at many levels; teaching, secretarial, and custodial positions often went unfilled or filled inadequately. Only two of the six upper grade teachers returned to the site in the second year of the study. There were new teachers in rooms 600, 501, 301 and 200. The teachers in rooms 200 and 301 were not new to the school site.

The students often went without a teacher when their usual teacher was sick. The school district argued that they did not have enough substitute teachers and so none was sent and the pupils were sometimes distributed to other classrooms late in the morning when it was finally determined that no sub would be coming.

In the fall of 1986, I returned to the research site during the second week of classes. I went directly to the school office; it was about 10:30 a.m. I was greeted warmly by the custodian and the former secretary. She was seated at the auxiliary desk. She had been sick when school had ended last term and I was happy to see her looking well. She introduced me to the new person seated at her old desk. She was here to train the newcomer.

The newcomer was to replace her even though she too was not bilingual in Spanish and English. The former secretary had been wanting to leave for the last year, but according to the school district a bilingual replacement could not be found and she was pressed into service for the whole year. The next week when I returned to the site the old secretary was back in her regular desk. The new recruit had preferred the assignment available at a different school site. After the first year of the study there were four other individuals who held the post of secretary.

During the three and a half years that I spent doing fieldwork there was never a permanent secretary at the site and often there was no secretary at all. It became more and more usual to see the principal sitting at the secretary's desk typing the school bulletin or some other administrative form.

THE LITERACY PROGRAM AT FREEWAY ELEMENTARY

> An educator's act is fitting when it responds to the questions and challenges proposed to him by the science he is teaching as in subject-centered teaching. When it responds to the spoken and unspoken, the large and the small questions of his students as in student-centered teaching. And when it fits into the total movement of the culture of which this education is one part. To be responsible is to be relevant; but to be relevant to only one demand is to be irrelevant.
> H. Richard Niebuhr, E.T. Earl Lecture, "The Idea Of Responsibility, February 28, 1962

How do people come to be literate? Is success wrapped up in motivation, the political status of the language, or is it a pedagogical or linguistic issue? These questions and others helped organize my research during the early stages. On the practical side I began by taking notes that addressed the everyday issues that the students and teachers lived out and demonstrated for me in concrete ways. For example, what does the literacy program consist of? What is it that teachers and students do when they are engaged in formal literacy training? What is the meaning behind what they are doing?

The first step of the research process in and of itself was very difficult because the standard for success, although never clearly articulated by many of the teachers, was nevertheless very high. This phenomenon became evident early in the study when many of the teachers had great difficulty identifying even a few students who in their judgment were achieving literacy in English successfully. I had planned to include ten students in my study but I had to content myself with only eight because the teachers could not identify any more successful students on their rolls. As my research progressed, other facets of this standard became clear. For example, if a student resisted doing ditto pages, workbook pages, and/or copying vocabulary definitions from a dictionary, the judgment was often made that he or she did not want to do reading, and moreover was not interested in learning.

Through studying the successful I also expected to discover things about those who did not succeed. In fact, I did gain insights about those who were not succeeding. The insights discovered were not those expected. How do some Latino students succeed academically and such large numbers fail year after year? All the players in the setting do their part to bring this about, albeit, all too often unwittingly.

Literacy development in a second language was defined according to the prescribed basal reader assignments. Reading was an exercise in filling in the blanks. Problem solving was not stressed. In some instances, it was clear that the reading teacher had not read the material before assigning it and correcting it with the students. A large portion of the students resisted the tedium of this literacy curriculum and did not do the work. The teachers had a very difficult time getting students to do their homework.

During the course of the study the uppergrade teachers did not hold circuit meetings to discuss the departmentalized reading program in either Spanish or English. The students' progress became known to the homeroom teacher only when grades for the report card periods were issued.

There did appear to be a specific body of knowledge that these students were supposed to absorb, internalize, or learn before leaving sixth grade. Much of it was in the form of rules, habits, and behaviors.

On the basis of practice, that is, the actual activities engaged in but not necessarily stated as educational priorities, it could be said that the teachers considered basic skills and test-taking skills as priorities. And, in fact, a large portion of the school year, indeed, each school day was spent in these kinds of rote and worksheet-oriented tasks. The teachers engaging in these practices believed that their efforts would result in better scores on the prescribed achievement tests.

Finally, the school setting was marked by overt racism and bias on the part of some staff members. Preferential status was imputed to the few Asians at the expense of the Blacks and Latinos. While it is always difficult to pinpoint the consequences of racist behavior, it is clearly a social structure that should not be ignored in any analysis of educational programming.

Generally speaking, the students resisted the tedious practice tests and ditto sheet exercises that were prescribed by many of the teachers. Some talented students who resisted this type of instructional practices helped secure a dismal outcome for themselves by unwittingly closing the doors on other options that might have been open to them. That is to say, by failing to achieve recognition for being successful academically, qualified students were cut off from enrichment activities outside of the immediate community and therefore from opportunities for personal development through other academic channels. The combination of the absence of other more developmentally-charged curricula and the students' resistance to the extended ---sometimes months long--- practice for test taking, resulted in extremely low achievement test scores. In the following sections I present a general description of the curriculum used for literacy development. For a more detailed description of each of the classrooms the reader is directed to the full study contained in the dissertation aforementioned.

English Reading

Classrooms 201, 300, 301, 401, 501 and 600 served the upper grade students, fourth-sixth grades. During the first year of the study, while I was trying to select the target students, I visited all of these reading classes. After the first year I spent all of my time in the reading classes for the selected students, Rooms 300 and 401 during the second year of the study and rooms 201, 300 and 401 during the third year.

The entire school reading program revolved around a basal reading series adopted by the district. Students progressed through the series on the basis of tests given at the end of each unit. At the end of the book a larger test was given and placement or promotion to another book was determined. During the spring of 1986, several of the students in Room 600 complained that they had been in the same book the year before. The usual advice given when students failed to pass the final unit test for the basal reader was to use a supplementary book instead of having the students repeat the same textbook.

Writing during the reading period in these classrooms consisted of filling in the form or workbook, copying out of a textbook or answering an informational type question based on what had been read. Room 301 was perhaps the only one in which an extension of the basal reader was attempted. The teacher would discuss the stories with the students even when it was clear that she had not read the selection ahead of time. The attempts were inconsistent however.

The Principal generally visited to read to classes. This is a brief description of one of her visits to room 201 in the fall of 1985. At 1:30 she began a discussion with the whole class. "What's the most important thing you learn in school"? One child responded, "Reading, because anything else you learn requires reading. A second child said, "English." The principal responds, "That's right, reading." She continues, "We want you to read because it's something you enjoy doing".

The principal would be coming in for a week to read a novel, Dear Mr. Henshaw, by Beverly Cleary. She engaged the students in a discussion of other books by the same author. When one student made a mistake recalling the title of one of Beverly Cleary's other novels (he said, The Runaway Mouse instead of Runaway Ralph) he was chided by another child about the actual title. This same student who made fun of the other student moaned audibly when the principal read the 10th or 11th letter in the book. At 1:52 the principal left after having read 20 pages.

English Language Arts and Writing

The English language arts lessons for the eight target students in the study took place in rooms 200, 300, 301, 401, and 501. At the end of the first year the teacher in room 501 left to go teach in another school district and the target students in his classroom moved to rooms 300 and 401 for reading. The teacher in room 301 during the '85-'86 school year retired from the district and another teacher who had been at the school site for a long time was assigned to room 301. Only one of the students, Flo, had English language arts in this room during the second year of the study. The rest of the target students had language arts in rooms 300 and 401.

A veteran teacher who had returned to the school site during the second year of the study taught reading and language and Spanish reading to some of the target students during the third year of the study in room 200. Ernesto and Flo had English language instruction in this classroom, Miguel and Vanessa had language in room 300 and Sara was in room 401 during the third year of the study.

The language arts program varied from teacher to teacher. In the two classrooms I observed during the first year, Rooms 401 and 501, the biggest difference was in the number of opportunities that the students had to speak and interact with each other and in the areas of emphasis in the instruction. The lessons in room 401 focused mostly on points of grammar that the teacher was sure would appear on the CTBS test. The students spent most, if not all, of their time filling in worksheets on correct usage and parts of speech. As the time drew nearer for the CTBS tests, lessons using the overhead projector and a sample of the worksheet that each student would eventually fill in were used on a regular, if not daily, basis.

The language arts period in room 501 was characterized by the teacher's attempts to alternate between providing ESL lessons to the 4-6 students in the class who had little or no facility in English and lessons modeled on co-operative learning techniques that the teacher was engaged in learning during the spring term. The lessons that grew out of the co-operative learning plan emphasized verbal interaction among groups of 4-5 students and competition among these teams. Sometimes the assignments included writing and sometimes they focused on discussion and collaboration.

Spanish reading

The issue of student resistance to Spanish reading classes became apparent early during the fieldwork. The Spanish reading program, like the English reading program, was also departmentalized. That is to say, the teachers also traded students for Spanish reading classes. The students were grouped according to reading level in Spanish. The teachers spent lots of time trying to correct acting out behavior and working hard to maintain the students' attention during Spanish reading. In addition, if one of the teachers was absent the Spanish reading classes were canceled.

Many of the Instructional Assistants were assigned to teach the Spanish reading classes because their skills in Spanish were often stronger than the credentialed teachers'. Unfortunately, the Instructional Assistants did not have training in how to give instruction and so the behavioral disruptions during Spanish reading classes were frequent and often detrimental to a smooth literacy training experience in Spanish.

Towards the end of the first year of the study the long-term sub in room 600 confronted her class with the issue of resistance to learning the Spanish language. Her skills in Spanish were excellent. She had graduated from a local high school in this school district and traveled south for college. After struggling for more than four weeks with students who did not do their work or homework, she asked the group point blank, "Who in here wants to learn?" Although her attempt to get the students to focus on the question and deal with the consequences of their resistance failed, it was a strategy that her replacement, a more seasoned teacher would use successfully to get some movement from the group during the following spring.

The teacher who replaced her in room 600 the following year was an experienced teacher, who had also served as a mentor teacher in the district. Although he was not a Latino his skills in the Spanish language were very well developed. None of my target students were in his homeroom or literacy classes so I did not observe very much in his classroom. He had been at a school where the majority of the students were Black and during a conversation with him he made some comparisons between the setting he had been in previously and Freeway Elementary.

He found the students at Freeway to be so much more well-behaved; they played better together, and there was very little arguing among the students. In fact the only discipline problems he was having were during the Spanish reading period. On the other hand he did not see the same degree of self-initiative in the Latinos. The range of discipline and academic behaviors was not as wide as what he had had in the previous setting. In his estimation the Latinos had more inhibitions and were more self-conscious.

In March of 1987 he invited the principal into his classroom to participate and/or listen to a discussion of his students' response and resistance to Spanish reading classes. None of my target

students were in his Spanish reading class but I also was invited to listen to the discussion. He began by stating that this would be a discussion about Spanish reading and the students' behavior during these periods. He was interested in making these periods a better experience for both himself and the students.

The principal commented that the students would probably not learn very much if they were not happy and she was interested in hearing what they had to say. Several of the students shared how they felt about the class. One girl said that she liked to talk in Spanish but she did not like to read in it because there were words that she did not understand. Another girl offered that she got mixed-up with the Spanish and English words. One boy stated, "The stories are dumb." Another comment was that this reader had words from Espana and the students did not know those words. The same student said that he hated writing and that he had barely learned how to read these words and the teacher wanted him to write words that he did not even know how to spell.

Other comments included, "Spanish reading takes more time." Another complained that it was "hard to speak Spanish all the time." Another stated that "the books were boring." Someone else said that they were "too tired after recess to do Spanish" and they wanted "to draw or something." Some said that they liked Spanish reading. Some of the reasons given included, they liked to read a lot, they liked the activities, the teacher had them play games in Spanish and they liked that. Another complained that everytime they played a game the teacher wanted them to speak only Spanish. One very astute comment was made by a student who was really coming to Spanish as a second language. He said that for those students who came from Mexico it was easier; they knew more Spanish and it was the opposite for him and the others who knew more English. Some students thought that they did not have enough work in Spanish and that they needed contracts or some way to do work independently instead of always doing it with the group.

The teacher ended the discussion with some comments on the students' responsibility for making things better. However, he also listened to and accepted their negative comments about the actual curriculum materials being used in this program.

AFTERWORD

How did these students succeed in becoming literate in English and successful in school? The description of the literacy program suggests that it was not as a result of substantial or consistent instruction. For they surely did not have that. Two of the eight were no longer considered successful by the end of the three year period. Miguel was not seen as a good student by his sixth grade English reading and language arts teacher. "He did not do his work." Miguel had been with this teacher for all three years.

Vanessa had a difficult time doing her work beginning in the fifth grade. She had had so many substitutes in her fourth grade reading class that it would be unfair to say that she had had

much instruction that year at all. By the end of that first year she was filling in the answers to the worksheets as the teacher called them out because she had not done her work. Neither one of these students was lacking in ability.

I began to see how easy it was for the number of Latinos who did not succeed in school to increase. I had begun with only eight students even though I had wanted a group of ten. Initially, this was a twenty percent loss because not enough students were viewed as successful by the teachers. And in the end twenty-five percent of the group had dropped out of the running. I remain hopeful that Miguel and Vanessa will be able to realize their talents in future educational settings.

Jorge, Delia, Diana, Miguel, and Ernesto, and Sara all had English reading for at least one year in room 401. Miguel had it for three. In this room the English reading curriculum followed "the book" (the basal reader) often without benefit of the initial discussion prescribed in the teacher's edition to provide background information for each story. The major portion of class time was spent "doing skills" in at least three workbooks and not actually "reading." When the students were finished the teacher read out the correct answers while students corrected each other's work. The teacher then asked for the scores and each student announced his or hers when his or her name was called. In this classroom the students' voices were very rarely heard even to do oral reading.

Jorge, Diana, and Delia also had one year of English reading in room 301. The curriculum was based on the same basal reader series, but this teacher relied on the students to talk about the story because she did not read or prepare the material before class. She said that there was nothing a teacher could do ahead of time and that the assignments would "just come to her" when she was with the students. There was more writing required in this classroom and fewer workbook pages, but the writing was generally not looked at for content or discussion of ideas but rather for correct form.

Both Sara and Vanessa had English reading in room 300 for two years and Flo had it in this room during fifth grade. This teacher had more knowledge about how to teach a second language because of what she had learned doing ESL instruction in Mexico. She was troubled by the departmentalized reading program, but she had another job in the evenings as a waitress and so she never got around to insisting on the changes that she thought were needed. During the second and third years of the study she consistently met with the reading groups that she had established. Some of her assignments deviated from those in the basal reader and she had more discussions with her class than took place in room 401.

Flo and Ernesto had English reading and language arts as well as Spanish reading in room 200 during sixth grade. This teacher traveled around her room during the course of her reading

lessons and made sure that her students were following along. She arranged the desks in the classroom so that she could quickly arrive at any desk easily.

Perhaps, she, more than any of the other teachers, made the best use of the reading curriculum by constantly extending discussions and assignments to include social studies and other areas of the curriculum. She often engaged in discussions with her students about possibilites for their future. She talked about their going to college and careers that they might be interested in pursuing. She was interested in her students achieving higher standards in their academic work and spent time teaching them study strategies that they had not received in other classrooms. She was well-liked and respected by her students and the other staff members. She had been teaching for more than ten years.

Over the course of the three years, language lessons in English in two of the classrooms (rooms 301 and 401) consisted of worksheets on points of grammar, e.g.,capitalization and parts of speech. In fact, the teacher in room 401 told me in March of the first year of the study that he was done with language for the rest of the school year except to drill and review for the CTBS. Up to that point he had not given any instruction in writing. He followed the same schedule during the next two years of the study. Diana, Delia and Jorge were in room 401 for two years.

Sara, Flo, Vanessa, Miguel and Ernesto had more variety in their language lessons. During the fourth grade they were in room 501 and that teacher encouraged speaking and writing during language time as part of the overall cooperative learning approach. These students had discussions with their teams on a daily basis and did some journal writing as well as other kinds of writing. Grammar was not restricted to worksheet assignments.

During the second year of the study, with the exception of Flo, the rest of the students were in room 300 for English language arts. The teacher in room 300 had taken some training from the Bay Area Writing Project the summer after the first year of the study. She incorporated some of the ideas from that training into her language arts period during the spring of the second year of the study. In addition, she spent time giving instruction on points of grammar and form before giving written assignments or worksheets. She did not understand, however, how to develop language skills past beginning ESL.

Flo was in room 301 for language instruction during the fifth grade. She had trouble staying interested in the assignments that were given in this classroom. The teacher did not appear to be able to provide instruction that was appropriate to the students' maturation or linguistic levels. Students were not to talk in this room. Infractions of strict rules resulted in the teacher putting a mark against a team or individual. The punishment of course was more time spent "sitting still" during recess and lunch periods.

There had been some isolated instances of instruction given during the three years that I followed these students, but one would be hard pressed to state that a coherent and consistent

literacy program in either language had been provided. And, as several of the staff members openly reported, it was not a functioning bilingual education program.

Given the scenario described in this work it is probably reasonable to conclude that the six students who remained successful did so in the face of an educational program that did not really address their needs. Another interpretation might suggest that they resisted the more prevalent outcome, academic underachievement. Nevertheless, these students did not experience a different program in literacy or even P.E. than their peers and we are left to ponder the experience and consequences for the majority of their classmates. It could well be that a very large portion of their classmates required a more consistent and coherent literacy program than was offered.

If we review the explanations voiced by some of the teachers we find that they echo some of the ideas presented in the "traditional explanations" for Latino underachievement in the research literature. The students "lack motivation"; they make the "classic" mistakes in English; they come to school not knowing their vowels, consonant clusters, and/or Mother Goose; they're "not ready to learn." Stated another way, the problem is with the students; they are just not ready to integrate linguistically or culturally; their adaptations to this society are found wanting.

Upon careful examination many of these criticisms can be unmasked and seen as the normal steps a learner takes in becoming proficient in a second language. You learn the vowels and consonant clusters as you learn the language and not the other way around. What is termed "a classic mistake" is generally interference or borrowing from the language you already know. Knowledge of the student's first language could have helped this teacher to see the student's confusion and then move to help clear it up. Instead, the teacher ridiculed.

What is missing from these explanations is any discussion of pedagogical issues and initiative for changing the curriculum to meet the needs of the students. A change in pedagogy was not considered as a viable means to get better results. Rather than examine the reading curriculum in both English and Spanish, the teachers focused on the fact that these students did not do their homework consistently. The question, why don't they do their homework was never asked. The rationale driving the literacy program remained unexamined.

The irrelevance of the curriculum materials used in Spanish reading was cited only by the short term teachers present during the first year of the study. Although one of the teachers present during the second and third years of the study had analyzed notes sent from home and decided that many of these families were probably illiterate in Spanish this did not prompt a more careful examination of the approach and materials being used for the Spanish reading curriculum. One is forced to ask why not?

Inservice training relevant to the instructional and linguistic issues these teachers were facing was met with indifference or strong resistance by all but two of the upper grade teachers. During one of the inservice programs on class management strategies for the upper grade teachers

during the third year of the study, the teacher in room 401 simply refused to engage in the self-monitoring exercise and insisted that he already called on all of his students in an equitable manner. In short, the ignorance on the part of the teachers at this school site about the normal course of linguistic development and better teaching practices led to the discriminatory labeling and classifying of students as lacking or defective.

I suggest that a more plausible explanation of the students' refusal to do their homework can be found in an analysis of the effects of these educational practices on the students. In a setting where students are not even allowed to speak while they are learning, perhaps the only way these students knew to resist this repressive practice lay in not doing the inappropriate quantity of irrelevant work. That is to say, the resistance that the teachers experienced as pervasive among the upper grade students was a passive resistance to an unreasonable and irrelevant school experience. The irony lies in the fact that many of the teaching practices the students had experienced had taught them how to be passive.

To repress means to prevent the natural or normal expression, activity. or development of. Repression of active engagement and participation in their own learning characterized many of the classrooms in which my eight students were enrolled. When the conversation is so tightly controlled by one person, children do not get the opportunity to use the language. Everything in the research literature on second language learning says that learners need to talk. When the curriculum is carried out as a whole class or in a group so large that individual participation on a regular basis becomes improbable, if not impossible, the addressing of individual differences and needs is severely curtailed, if it is possible at all.

The act of reading and/or becoming literate requires the learner to be engaged actively in the experience. During the first year of the study, when the teacher in room 301 complained that when the principal came into the classroom "to read" to the students, the experience "got the kids excited," she was objecting to the students' active involvement. As the plot of the story thickened and because they could understand the story the students made comments to each other such as: "I know what's gonna happen," "ooh," "He's gonna get it, I know, I know." When students get involved in their learning they make more noise and they talk more.

Some of the most offensive acts of repression were practiced during the lessons taught during the English reading and language arts periods in rooms 301 and 401 during the second and third year of the study. The repression of the students in room 301 at the hands of a teacher who insisted she was a Christian militant would be comical if it were not such a violation of human rights.

The repression practiced in room 401 was not carried out in the name of Christianity, but it was an impediment just the same. I recorded more than sixty hours of audio tape in that classroom during reading and language periods and the only voice that can be heard is the teacher's. The

teacher's voice is heard as he gives assignments, announces correct answers and asks the students to give the resulting score on the assignment that has just been corrected. This teacher did not provide instruction and his weekly preparations were minimal. In addition he also did not allow students to talk.

Room 300 was not characterized by overt repressive practices but the students were repressed, that is, their development was impeded by a literacy curriculum that did not meet their needs. Repression does not necessarily require maliciousness. I would argue that the outcome was achieved in this instance through lack of knowledge on the part of the teacher.

The repressive practices evident in the English reading classes during the first year of the study in room 200 appear to have had their basis in racist attitudes and these will be discussed later Lest the reader think that the students escaped this treatment after the first year, let me recall for you the fact that this teacher was assigned to teach music and P.E. during the second year and all the students in the school were enrolled in these classes.

Because the literacy curriculum presented in room 200 during the third year of the study was constantly being reshaped to meet the needs of the students and the future educational challenges that the teacher assumed her students would face, her treatment of the students could not be termed repressive.

I do not know how long a student can remain interested in this type of irrelevant or repressive educational experience. Perhaps it varies with the individual. However, the material conditions of an educational experience must certainly be taken into account as we try to give meaning to the overwhelming drop-out rates among Latino students. Certainly, nothing in the research literature on literacy development in a second language would support the kinds of repressive and deadening educational practices that generally characterized the educational programming at Freeway Elementary.

The more significant, difficult and crucial analysis of this literacy program, however, must move beyond the classrooms to the social structures that circumscribed the educational practices offered to these students. We must ask the question: How did the status or social standing of this community affect the educational programming that these students received? The social status and value ascribed to this and perhaps other school sites serving minorities and/or the poor is the most powerful explanatory factor we can evoke here.

Yes, the literacy program was seriously flawed, but the more disturbing fact is that there was no movement at the district level to improve the situation. The needs of this school commuity went unmet even when the students and the parents complained. Did the damaging situation go unchecked because this community believes itself to be politically powerless? Is it politically powerless?

One of the most disturbing realizations that I became aware of during the course of the study was that there were no recourse that the administration could bring to bear against the unacceptable or even destructive practices that occurred at the school site. When students complained about the "Christian birthday song" and utter boredom that they were experiencing at the hands of the teacher in room 301 during the second year of the study, the prinicpal said that she could not do anything about it. She was forced to keep that teacher.

I am convinced now, even as I was then, that that would not have been the case in a more affluent community. It is also inconceivable that a school in a higher socio-economic neighborhood would go without a secretary for a month, let alone the three years that there was no permanent secretary at this school site. Finally, it would be interesting to know how many schools have to do without substitute teachers and who those schools serve.

The very serious charge of racism and the less than satisfactory resolution to the issue is perhaps the strongest indicator of social structures that circumscribe this school site and the Latinos in this society. The last two national administrations have made it acceptable for people to voice and practice racism. The teacher's union would not have been able to secure a teaching position for the prep teacher after she had been removed on the basis of racist attitudes and treatment of the staff and students had that behavior not been sanctioned at a higher level. Is the message being sent that in the overall scheme of things these students do not matter?

In his latest book on the public schools in the United States, Savage Inequalities, Jonathan Kozol discusses the meaning of the huge economic disparities between schools that serve the rich and the poor, mostly minority students, all over the country. The change in posture that has taken place in this country over the last twenty-five years as the gap between the rich and the poor has become insurmountable is artfully articulated by one of the principals that Kozol interviews in the Bronx. The issue is no longer raised as a moral question or a question of conscience but rather as a threat of the violence that will surely ensue if adequate schooling opportunities do not become available to all students.

> I don't think the powers that be . . . understand, or want to understand, that if they do not give these children a sufficient education to lead healthy and productve lives, we will be their victims later on. We'll pay the price someday---in violence, in economic costs. I despair of making this appeal in any terms but these. You cannot issue an appeal to conscience . . . today. The fair play argument won't be accepted. So you speak of violence and hope that it will scare the city into action.

At the present time it is hard to know if the threat of violence would work in the state of California. What is clear, however, is that the call for a more equitable school system for Latino students on moral grounds has not worked and there is no point in making any arguments for change on those grounds. On the other hand, what does strike a fearful chord in some people's hearts is the

demographic fact that half of the state's population is expected to be Latino by the year 2000. The state cannot afford a large functionally illiterate group. This tragedy will cut the state's wealth detrimentally. I have brought my research findings to light in hopes that more enlightened decisions about the allocation of educational resources can be made for all our sakes. We stand to lose much more than can be gained by denying the unacceptable material conditions circumscribing educational programming for Latinos.

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